

sort of certainty our labor markets need.

It is true—maybe except for the great State of North Dakota—that we have made steady progress, but overall unemployment remains too high. We all want to be similar to North Dakota, with a very low unemployment rate. Our economy—the American economy—continues to grow, with Colorado growing at the fourth fastest rate in the Nation. In doing so, many of our business sectors, economic sectors, and industries are experiencing higher labor demand than there is available domestic supply.

Taking agriculture, for example, which is important to the Presiding Officer's State as well, the demand for labor on farms and ranches across the Nation far exceeds the supply of Americans who are willing to fill those jobs. That labor shortage has resulted in crops left to rot in the fields and, therefore, unacceptable economic losses to our communities.

Farmers and ranchers tell me that today they are often left to hire undocumented workers to fill this labor gap. This unregulated, under-the-table hiring hurts immigrants who experience frequent exploitation, constant fear, and often debilitating poverty. It also hurts Americans who experience depressed wages and higher unemployment as a result of competition with this cheap underground workforce. That doesn't make sense.

This immigration reform bill eliminates this unfair competition and ensures that all Americans receive fair wages.

Our current labor supply challenges extend to many other sectors as well. Jobs in science, technology, engineering, and math are growing at three times the rate of other jobs in the United States. With that in mind, and in spite of high levels of unemployment, nearly 100,000 valuable American-based positions in critical high-tech firms, such as IBM, Microsoft, and Intel, have been left unfilled. By 2018, estimates are that this number will increase to 230,000.

This bill, which we are so close to getting across the finish line, focuses heavily on breaking down barriers in our current immigration and visa system to help fill this staggering labor gap and spur our economy in the process. The more flexible market-based system for visas included in this bill will ensure our immigration system only brings workers businesses need. Moreover, this bill will ensure that Americans get a first pass at jobs before foreign workers are eligible to fill them. That is an important element, one that Coloradans have told me they demand.

But it is not only about ensuring that the bill before us doesn't displace current U.S. citizens, I would point out to my friends who are skeptical of this effort that immigrants in this country also have an incredible and phenomenal history of creating jobs.

Let me share a couple numbers with everybody. Between 1990 and 2005, immigrants started 25 percent of the highest growth companies in this country, directly employing over 200,000 people. Since 2007, immigrant-founded small businesses have provided employment for 4.7 million people and generated almost \$800 billion in revenue.

Big-time American companies, such as Intel, Google, eBay, and Sun Microsystems, were all created by immigrants—companies that helped to form the very roots of our thriving tech industry.

I wish to take a minute to thank the Gang of 8 specifically for their efforts to include a section in the bill that creates the INVEST Program, which focuses on incentivizing entrepreneurs, such as the founders of these iconic companies, to come to the United States. This program, which draws on the bipartisan Startup Visa Act I introduced with Senator FLAKE—and includes the work of Senators MORAN, WARNER, and others—will ensure that the next generation of entrepreneurs and job creators can stay in the United States and create good American jobs. Last week, after listening to advocates, Senator WARNER and I filed an amendment that we think will bolster these provisions even further, and we certainly hope our colleagues will think it is a good enough idea to include in the final legislation.

Programs in the underlying bill, such as INVEST, will help supercharge our economy by helping to create thousands of jobs over the next decade.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: "America is another word for opportunity." We take pride in our rich history of being a country where the key to earning a valued place in society is through ability and determination, where immigrants from all over the world—alongside third- and fourth-generation Americans—can earn an honest living or start a business. It is incumbent on us, as Members of Congress, to actively ensure that America remains the land of opportunity.

As the Presiding Officer knows, that starts with our children, including undocumented children, our DREAMers, who know of no other place but here as their home.

I wish to close by talking about a DREAMer. His name is Oscar. I wish to make the case for Oscar and his family.

Oscar and his brothers, Juan and Hugo, are the children of parents who illegally immigrated into the United States and brought their kids with them. They now live in my State of Colorado. Throughout their entire lives, they lived in fear of the black cloud of deportation that has hung over them.

I had the pleasure of meeting Oscar here in Washington a couple of months ago. He had a very simple request for a kid who grew up in the United States. He wanted the opportunity for himself and his brothers to come out of the shadows and become someone.

Where are Oscar and his brothers right now? They are in college pursuing degrees in engineering and psychology. Let's design a commonsense policy that will allow them to work after they graduate. Let's give Oscar, and the millions like him, the opportunity to come out of the shadows and become the next generation of American leaders, innovators, and job creators.

This week we are faced with a choice: We can put into place a bill that was negotiated by Members of both sides of the aisle, one that takes historic and far-reaching steps to secure our borders and provides a tough but fair pathway to legal status and an exit from the shadows for those who are here illegally. This bill will help crack down on employer exploitation and help give American businesses the secure and stable workforce they deserve. The other option would be to try and delay this bill and continue on with a broken system that continually undermines our economy by keeping millions in the shadows. We could keep the system that denies the best and the brightest a viable path to citizenship and instead would encourage them to create jobs abroad for our global competitors such as China and India.

Let's not deny Oscar and his brothers the opportunity to come out of the shadows and be the next generation of American workers. Let's continue to work on amendments, and let's pass this comprehensive immigration reform bill this week.

I thank the Presiding Officer for her patience, for her forbearance.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:54 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m., and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF PENNY PRITZKER TO BE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Penny Pritzker, of Illinois, to be Secretary of Commerce.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there is 30 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, for those who are following the debate of the Senate, we are in the midst of the debate on the immigration reform bill, expecting votes on amendments this

week, and then final passage. It is a historic and important measure. We have interrupted it briefly to consider a nomination that is important as well. It is the nomination by President Obama of Penny Pritzker of Chicago to be the next Secretary of Commerce in the President's Cabinet.

I know Penny and I know her family and I know the reputation they enjoy in Chicago, in Illinois, and around the world. She is an extraordinary person. The Pritzker family has been successful in business for many decades and many generations. She stepped up years ago and told her father she wanted to play a role in business leadership. There weren't that many women involved in business leadership at that time, but her father said he would give her an opportunity, and he did. She became very successful with the corporation, with the family businesses, and has made a name for herself over the years.

Penny has decades of business, entrepreneurial, and, equally important for this job, civic experience. Despite her success in the private sector, Penny Pritzker and her family have given unsparingly of their own time to help many important causes. She understands business and economic development, but she also understands the reality of the challenges many families face across our country.

We know the jobs report from earlier this month showed we had 6.9 million jobs created over 39 consecutive months of private sector job growth. That is progress. We have come a long way. But let's make no mistake, families are still struggling to find work and many who are working are struggling paycheck to paycheck to survive. Penny Pritzker will bring considerable experience to the Department of Commerce to help us create new businesses and job opportunities in America.

Penny understands what it takes to build a business from scratch. She has done it five different times with start-up businesses. She has created jobs that support families and communities across America.

More than creating jobs, she has helped countless people get the education they need to connect them with job opportunities.

She leads Skills for America's Future, a national program bringing together businesses, community colleges, and others, preparing workers for good-paying 21st century jobs.

In addition to education, Penny Pritzker is an ardent supporter of the arts, which supports economic development and tourism across the Nation. She is a member of the American Academy of the Arts and Sciences and a trustee of the Kennedy Center.

There is no question that our economy is headed in the right direction. The question is: Who will pursue today's efforts to continue that growth and lead us to future success? Who will continue efforts to help American businesses in the global marketplace?

Although we are on the right track, too many businesses in America are still struggling to survive. Expanding the new markets is one way to help American business and our economy. We need a Secretary of Commerce who will not only help small businesses grow and create jobs but also open opportunities for businesses to expand their products and services across the States, the country, and the globe.

Penny Pritzker called me a couple of weeks ago and urged me, if possible, to do everything I could to try to get her nomination moving before July. I talked to Senator REID, who was fully supportive of the President's nominee. The reason she is anxious to do that is because important trade discussions are going to begin after the 1st of July with some of the leading economic powers around the world. She wanted to be at that table. It is important for America that she is.

Penny knows what it takes to make business work. She knows the tools businesses need. What is more, she knows economic development at all levels.

Colleagues from both sides of the aisle agree we need job creation. Penny Pritzker has a proven track record in promoting jobs and growth, and her leadership will help our country. Her decades of experience will serve her well. Ms. Pritzker's wide-ranging perspective will prove worthwhile to the future of our Nation as we compete in the global marketplace.

I urge my colleagues to support Ms. Penny Pritzker's nomination, and I look forward to working with her as she is hopefully going to be the next Secretary of Commerce under the Obama administration.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, I also rise in support of Penny Pritzker for Secretary of Commerce. I think she will do an excellent job.

I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 3 or 4 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING KEN DUKE

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, I rise today to honor Ken Duke of Hope, AR. Ken is an incredible athlete who has a great story and is actually here with us today.

Years ago, as a teenager, Ken was diagnosed with scoliosis and he was forced for years to wear a back brace. There were times when he had to wear that back brace for 23 hours a day. He underwent surgery and numerous treatments. Eventually they put a metal rod in his spine and the rod is still there today.

Despite all of those tough circumstances, he persevered. He went on to win his high school district golf tournament. He was wearing the back brace, no less.

In recent years, Ken became a strong advocate for those suffering from spi-

nal problems. He now hosts an annual charity golf tournament called "A Day with Duke."

Anyway, after playing golf for Henderson State University—and might I say, Go Reddies—he turned professional. As do many professional golfers, he had his good days and bad days, his ups and downs. It is a tough life. He has been out there plugging away week in and week out. But this past Sunday Ken had one of his best days of golf he has ever had in his career. At the Travelers Championship in Cromwell, CT, Duke faced a tense playoff with Chris Stroud. After Stroud had chipped in on the 18th hole, the men were neck and neck, both at 12 under par. But Ken pushed ahead, making a 2½ foot birdie putt on the second playoff hole to clinch his first PGA tour victory. This was not only a great shot and a great round of golf, but it is also a great American story.

Arkansas is very proud of Ken, and we hope there are many wins in his future. I wanted to say "congratulations."

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, I have the honor to chair the Commerce Committee and thus have enormous interest in who our next Commerce Secretary is going to be. I don't think the President could have picked anybody better.

I have known Penny Pritzker for 30 years. I have Chicago relations in my family too. She is a force of nature. That is the thing I want people to understand: She is a force of nature. Yes, she is wealthy. Yes, she is experienced in business. Yes, she is experienced in public service. She is a tiger of energy and purpose.

The Department of Commerce is probably the most complicated—I don't know compared to DOD, but I think it is the most complicated non-DOD agency. We have oceans, spectrum, aviation, trains. There are a thousand different areas, including all the oceans. It takes a real leader and it takes a tough person. We haven't had a tough enough person for a while. We had one, but then because of health reasons that person had to resign.

I cannot imagine a better—and I don't say these things often about nominees—I cannot imagine a more perfect person to run the Department of Commerce than Penny Pritzker. I hope my colleagues will vote for her overwhelmingly.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor, and note the absence of a quorum.